

Service of Process

As an ACP participant, the victim has designated the Secretary of State as their agent for service of process and for receipt of mail. The Secretary of State accepts legal documents on their behalf. The participant may not avoid legal responsibilities by refusing to accept mail forwarded by the ACP. The ACP's receipt of documents is considered the participant's receipt of those documents. Accordingly, the participant is legally responsible for obligations contained in all documents at the time of receipt by the ACP.



Public Schools

When a student presents his or her ACP authorization card, the school must accept the ACP substitute address. The student does **not** have to disclose his or her actual address. Verification of enrollment eligibility and transfer of school records are handled by ACP staff.

Things to Remember

- Each participant will receive an ACP number. The personal ACP number will be unique and must be included on all of the participant's mail.
- If a participant moves or has a change of name or phone number, the ACP must be notified as soon as possible.
- Upon entering or leaving the ACP, a participant should **not** notify the U.S. Post Office of any address change. The ACP will advise the participant of the best way to redirect their mail.
- ACP enrollment is effective for 4 years. A program participant must reapply if continuation of the program is desired.
- Although the Office of Secretary of State may verify the participation of a participant in the Program, the Office may **not** otherwise disclose any records of a participant without a court order.

Commitment

The ACP is committed to providing the most secure and efficient mail-forwarding service possible for participants in the Program. Working with various State and local domestic violence advocates, our office offers its services as an important part of the safety solution for victims of domestic violence.

**For more information about this Program,
or for an Application Assistant near you,
please call:**

1-800-633-9657 x3875



Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr., Governor • Mary D. Kane, Secretary

MARYLAND



Office of the Secretary of State



The Program

The Maryland Safe at Home Address Confidentiality Program (ACP) is administered by the Office of the Secretary of State and provides an important service to victims of domestic violence.

The Program has two components:

- First, the ACP provides a substitute address for victims who have moved or are about to move to a new location unknown to their abuser.
- Secondly, the Program provides participants with a free confidential mail-forwarding service for first-class mail and legal papers.

In most cases, using the substitute address allows State and local agencies to respond to requests for public information without disclosing the victim's actual address.

The ACP is not for everyone. A victim services professional from a domestic violence program can help determine if ACP should be part of the victim's safety plan.

Who May Apply?

Any of the following people may apply to the Program:

- A person who is a victim of domestic violence;
- A parent or guardian of a minor child who fears for the safety of the minor child; or
- The guardian of a disabled person, if the guardian fears for the safety of the disabled person.

Applying for Participation

Because participation in the Maryland Safe at Home Address Confidentiality Program is only **one part** of a victim's overall safety plan, we encourage all applicants to apply through a trained Application Assistant in one of the domestic violence program offices located throughout the State.

Application Assistant

The Application Assistant will help the victim decide if ACP should be part of the victim's safety plan, explain ACP services, explain the victim's responsibilities, and assist with the completion of the application materials. The victim will mail the completed application to the ACP.

Enrolling a Program Participant

Once accepted into the ACP, the participant will receive a packet of information which includes the ACP authorization card. The ACP card includes the victim's name, signature, substitute address, and individual ACP number. **It is the victim's responsibility to tell State and local government agencies that they participate in the ACP.** Enrollment is for 4 years unless cancelled by the participant or ACP.

The ACP is only **one part** of a Safety Strategy. By itself, the ACP cannot keep a person safe. Combined with other safety strategies, the ACP can help a victim start a new life.

This program is **only effective** if the victim has recently moved and the abuser does not know the victim's new address.

What is the Substitute Address?

The substitute address provided to a victim by the ACP has no relation to the victim's actual address. The address may be used by the participant to receive first-class mail, registered mail, certified mail, and legal papers. The ACP does not forward magazines or packages. The victim may also use the substitute address as a return address on mail sent.

It is important to understand that once enrolled in the ACP, first-class mail or legal papers will be delayed. However, the ACP will do its best to forward mail promptly.

When to Use the Substitute Address

ACP participants should use the ACP substitute address every time they interact with State and local government agencies. If an agency has questions about the program or use of the address, ask the agency to call ACP at the number on the back of the card. If victims provide State or local government agencies with their actual address, it *could* become public information.

Private companies (like department stores, banks, phone companies, insurance agents) do not have to accept the substitute address, but many businesses are willing to do so. The victim should not hesitate to ask them to send their first-class mail to their ACP substitute address.

Voter Registration

The State Board of Elections has an address confidentiality program which allows voters to have their actual address suppressed and therefore not part of any public record. The ACP urges participants who are eligible voters to apply to vote as an absentee voter. The ACP also urges participants **not** to use the Motor Voter system because doing so could compromise their actual address records.